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Official Records

3rd plenary meeting
Monday, 8 June 1998, 7 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mohammed (Ethiopia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Tiiu Aro, Minister of Social Affairs of Estonia.

Mrs. Aro (Estonia): It is a great honour for me to participate in this high-level meeting to discuss one of the most serious and widespread problems of the world. I am pleased that we all share the commitment to reduce and prevent the illicit production, sale and demand of narcotic substances and I am confident that this special session will be an important milestone in this endeavour.

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Estonia, I welcome all participants and all people around the world who contribute to the prevention and solution of problems associated with narcotic drugs. We welcome all the efforts of the United Nations to prevent illicit drug-trafficking in the world. The United Nations has achieved important results in evaluating the spread of drug addiction. The Organization also issues annual surveys in this field, trains experts, supports scientific research, generates programmes for the prevention of drug addiction and treatment, develops international cooperation and formulates international drug policy.

We consider the International Narcotic Control Board and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme to be among the most important international organizations mandated to deal with drug-related issues. These bodies provide us with common standards and legal instruments, thereby ensuring stable cooperation between States. They also support the global mitigation of damage caused by drug addiction. We are convinced that the documents prepared for the current special session of the General Assembly contain a profound and comprehensive approach to the measures to be taken in the future.

Estonia aspires to meet all the requirements of the United Nations drug Conventions to which it has acceded. Last year, our Parliament, the Riigikogu, passed a new Narcotic Drugs Act. A national programme for the prevention of alcoholism and drug addiction is being implemented. We intend to continue close cooperation with the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the appropriate structures in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

We are aware that, in Estonia, the problems associated with narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances will increase in the near future. Some of our difficulties are caused by the social and demographic heritage of the last 50 years and by the fact that Estonia is now more open to outside influences, including negative social aspects.

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In recent decades, we have witnessed a globalization of public behaviour and youth culture. This also applies to the use of narcotic drugs. Within certain groups of society, there is ignorance and a refusal to abide by international and national legislation on narcotic drugs. To avoid this, we should put more emphasis on striving for positive values, such as health, social welfare and social security. As the Minister of Social Affairs, a physician and mother, I am of the opinion that the renaissance of moral and ethical values and the importance of a strong family — mother, father and children — will help to reduce drug addiction and the diseases and violence associated with it.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister of Social Affairs of Estonia for her statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alberto Scavarelli, Secretary of State of Uruguay.

Mr. Scavarelli (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We, the Member States of the United Nations, have been working together for over 15 months, with courage and mutual respect in an environment of trust, trying to establish a common course of action to resolve the world drug problem. Because we have worked with courage, respect and trust, we have today an unprecedented, valuable, well-balanced and reliable global political commitment.

Today we all know that, throughout the world, the drug problem is a real threat to our societies and most certainly will be so for a long time. It is up to us, as sovereign States, in the exercise of our freedom and responsibilities, to broaden the opportunities for people of all conditions to avoid exposing themselves to a danger of this nature and magnitude.

Today, as never before, we are clearly stating that the seriousness of the problem is reflected not only in its scope and global reach, but also in its complex external components. The drug problem is a vicious circle perpetuated as individuals yield to the temptation to consume. The drug consumption of a humanity under terrible pressure at the end of this century seems to be fuelled by urgent but often false priorities.

Less than two years ago, Mexico launched the initiative to convene a world conference at the highest political level in order to consider the drug issue properly. From the heart of Bolivia, at that time the headquarters of the Rio Group, we flew to Vienna for the session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. We thus began complex and successful negotiations that culminated in the General Assembly resolution of December 1996, which called for the convening, at the highest political level, of this twentieth special session of the General Assembly devoted to the world drug problem.

As plenipotentiary representative of Uruguay and representative of the President of the Republic, Dr. Julio María Sanguinetti, I express my country's commitment to the Political Declaration and Action Plan, which we support without hesitation or reservation.

Uruguay was in the forefront of these negotiations from the beginning. It was elected First Vice-Chairman of the preparatory body, which was open to all States Members of the United Nations, and accepted this challenge firmly and with the kind of conviction and confidence fostered only by just causes. We worked under the remarkable presidency of Portugal, supported by the efficient management of the Executive Director and the Secretariat of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna.

Not long before that, my country had accepted, in the same spirit and with the same resolve, another historical challenge: the chairmanship to guide the establishment of the Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere of the Organization of American States/Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission. This turned out to be an important contribution to the world agreement that we will soon adopt at this special session of the General Assembly.

This Political Declaration and its Action Plan include themes of special importance that ensure that the agreements achieved will have historic significance. Some of these important themes include, the establishment for the first time of guiding principles of drug demand reduction. We recognize this is an essential component of the problem. We have encouraged the promotion of orderly international cooperation, without which any effort to address these problems would fail, since they are clearly interrelated at the international level. We have achieved an Action Plan against Illicit Manufacture, Trafficking and Abuse of Amphetamine-type Stimulants and their Precursors, made necessary by the rapid geographical distribution of these substances and the danger their consumption represents.

We have agreed on measures to control precursors and the laboratory equipment where they are made, for

the simple reason that, without precursors, drugs would practically be non-existent. States have pledged to establish effective inspection measures and to apply the principle "know your client" to those who trade in these products and technical equipment. We have strengthened judicial cooperation in full compliance with the international legal order. In accordance with their constitutional principles, legal orders and national jurisdictions, States must cooperate effectively in implementing the law so that drug criminals are able to find refuge and impunity nowhere in the world.

We have committed ourselves to adopting measures against money-laundering, which threatens the stability, honesty and security of the financial, commercial and productive systems of States. This attacks drug-trafficking at its most sensitive point, the very sources of the illicit income earned through the degradation and suffering of so many people around the world.

Uruguay has insisted that, in order to defeat the internationalization of crimes related to money-laundering, the deviation of chemical precursors and the production and illicit traffic of explosives and firearms, we must enjoy the cooperation of legally established commercial enterprises connected to these issues. This must not affect efficient control by the State which without endangering freedom of trade, must offer sufficient guarantees. This means that the effective application of the principle "know your client" in all these activities is essential in the effective battle against criminal organizations, though it should not take advantage of the good faith of legal enterprises.

Without money-laundering, drug-trafficking would not exist. Without weapons and explosives, terror and organized crime would not exist. Without precursors and laboratories, there would be no drugs. Without consumers, there would be no demand and without demand, supply would be extinguished. Today, we clearly accept these principles and believe that there are genuine grounds for hope.

We reaffirm the importance of eradicating illicit crops for drug production. We see in alternative development a powerful instrument with a twofold purpose: reducing drug supply and promoting the sustainable development of impoverished communities involved in this illegal cultivation.

In order to achieve these goals, we have established deadlines and procedures. The Political Declaration and its Action Plan are the result of all our efforts, achieved principle by principle, from the diversity of our cultures and inspired by the unanimous conviction that, together, we can fulfil the responsibility we share for solving a problem that moves us all.

Sustainable human development is at stake, as are individual freedom with responsibility, dignity and the certain hope that women and men in this global village that we share will be able to fulfil the social commitment to work day by day to create free societies, more united in peace. Only with personal freedom can one assume responsibilities. Drug consumption affects this freedom, the capacity to understand reality, and effective participation in shaping our era. We must act together with resolve, in full respect for national sovereignty, without fear and with confidence, because fear and mistrust lead to irrationality, which in turn brings our efforts to naught.

We Uruguayans, on the basis of our inalienable freedom, undertake the unshakable commitment to make our best efforts to cooperate in resolving the world drug problem, because essential values are at risk. We strongly believe with firm political will that international cooperation and multilateral organizations are powerful instruments to deal with problems of such gravity and importance.

Full respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and for the principles of international law on non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States and respect for territorial integrity and national sovereignty are the pillars of fraternal and effective international cooperation. Liberty, peace, human rights, the environment, quality of life, sustainable human development and the eradication of poverty are the challenges of our times. The drug problem is related in some way to each of these vital issues.

This is Uruguay's belief on which it acts, day by day, in its effort to shoulder its part of the responsibility we all share, in the full conviction that, as the Political Declaration affirms, "Together we can meet this challenge."

The Acting President: I thank the Secretary of State of Uruguay for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thorsteinn Pálsson, Minister of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs of Iceland.

Mr. Pálsson (Iceland): The world is facing a serious drug problem, a problem that is especially threatening to the lives and development of young people all over the world. Our challenge is to find ways and means to overcome this problem. I believe it can be done by global action through a combination of international and domestic strategies. This special session gives us, the participants, the opportunity to send the message of our determination and commitment to counter this global problem.

In December 1996, the Icelandic Government introduced a comprehensive Action Plan in the fight against tobacco, alcohol and drug use. This Action Plan recognizes that the drug problem is a common and shared responsibility which requires an integrated and balanced approach. The Action Plan is based on a comprehensive governmental policy adopted at the same time. With its policy, the Icelandic Government pledges to eliminate drug use among young people and to decrease drastically their use of alcohol and tobacco. Towards the year 2000, the focal points of the policy are directed towards prevention, discouraging the initial use of drugs, a decrease in drug-related crimes, the elimination of tolerance towards teenage drinking, and early intervention strategies.

One of the main elements of the Action Plan of the Icelandic Government is the project Drug-free Iceland, which was formally launched in February 1997. This project is a cooperative effort of the Government of Iceland, Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, the Union of Local Authorities in Iceland and the association European Cities Against Drugs. The project has a five-year time-frame. Consequently, in the year 2002, the cooperating partners in the project will take stock and evaluate the result of the work.

The project is an ambitious one. But when it comes to drugs, there can be no other goal than this. This objective will not be easy to achieve and our success will greatly depend an international commitment to eliminating the world drug problem. In this regard, no country stands in isolation from the outside world. The aim of the project is to mobilize Icelandic society as a whole and reach a nationwide agreement on the goal of a drug-free Iceland. By launching specific activities and demand reduction strategies, we plan to raise public consciousness about the hazards of drug use and thus receive active support at all levels regarding the measures that need to be taken.

Allow me to further elaborate on what we have been doing as part of this project in its first year. We are actively supporting research work in this field in order to improve the effectiveness of the preventive work carried out. We are increasing budgetary allocations to both customs and police to strengthen their work against drug-trafficking and distribution. We are, in cooperation with parents' organizations, raising parents' awareness of the dangers of teenage drug use. We want to make parents aware of the importance of a close relationship between parents and teenagers, the amount of time they spend together and parental supervision. We are actively involving youth in the preventive work against drinking and drugs. We have developed a dialogue with teenagers to get their views on what measures are most likely to reach them in preventive work. Young people are concerned and we have listened to their messages regarding their expectations. As a part of this, we are supporting an ambitious project, still in its preparatory stages, that has the purpose of uniting the youth of Europe against drugs.

We are focusing on the special needs of youths who have become drug abusers. We are forging partnerships by collaborating with the various bodies, official and private, that work in the preventive field. I would like to mention parents, teachers, health professionals and youth and community organizations. Partnerships are essential if we are to reach our goal of eliminating drugs.

I have very briefly described the work we have launched in Iceland in our fight against drug abuse. I find it extremely encouraging to see the conformity between our work in Iceland and the measures recommended for tackling the drug problem in the various draft declarations of this session.

On behalf of the Icelandic Government, I would like to reaffirm our support for the United Nations and its drug control organ as the global forum for multilateral cooperation. The drug problem can be addressed only through international cooperation in combination with coordinated national efforts. The United Nations plays a key role in mobilizing the international community in the fight against drugs. Together, the nations of the world can meet the challenges of combating the world drug problem.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs of Iceland for his statement.

I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Carme Sala Sansa, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports of Andorra.

Ms. Sansa (Andorra): Three years ago, during the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, Andorra highlighted the fact that youth who lose hope and fall prey to unemployment become very vulnerable and can more easily be steered towards the use of drugs and other forms of escapism.

My country has an age-distribution pyramid that is very different from that of the rest of Western Europe. We have a lot of young people in Andorra, and the birth rate is higher than in our neighbouring regions. It is therefore natural that we are particularly attentive to what becomes of young people and that we continuously strive to find ways of preventing our youth from wasting their lives. As the Minister of Education and Sports, but especially today as the Minister of Youth of Andorra, I wish to emphasize during the course of this conference the rising tide of drug abuse among young people.

The United Nations has circulated a fact sheet indicating that the age of initiation into drug abuse is falling almost every year. This is especially notable with regard to people seeking treatment for opiate abuse during 1995, when more young people in the 15-to-19 age group entered treatment than during the whole three-year period from 1992 to 1994. The fact sheet further states that this is not only a phenomenon of developed countries, but that many developing States have indicated a similar trend in the growing number of young people abusing cannabis, heroin, stimulants and hallucinogens.

How many promising young lives have to be broken, how many families torn apart, how many societies diseased by this insidious and silent self-destruction before we react? And what can Governments do? I believe that, at least at the level of prevention, the answer may lie more in decentralized action at the level of small communities than in sweeping governmental programmes that might not reach their individual targets. Coming from a small country where anti-drug programmes have yielded good results, I am inclined to trust the power of a strong, small community in the battle against drugs. The encouragement of sports activities at the amateur level, education oriented to the development of productive skills and the promotion of a sense of belonging and self-esteem for young people can help them resist peer pressure to try drugs or even create peer pressure against drug use.

Even though drug abuse is a global problem and is present everywhere, Andorra has been blessed with a very low consumption rate, which I attribute to the fact that, up to now, our young people have been touched at a very local level by a life-enhancing environment in which parents, local authorities and governmental powers have converged to provide a sense of community.

Helping drug addicts return to a drug-free life is always more difficult than preventing drug use in the first place, for drugs alter people's personalities and create addictions that are very hard to eradicate. The rehabilitation and social integration of drug addicts, as well as the prevention of diseases such as AIDS, whose spread is related to drug abuse, are also considered a priority by my Government and have been targeted as such by the Ministry of Health.

Shortly after the adoption in 1988 of the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, a cause for celebration today, the only seven existing Andorran banks, in close cooperation with the Government, adopted an internal code of conduct which goes beyond the wording of the Convention itself. In 1992, these provisions were integrated into Andorran criminal law. To this day, Andorra has been absolutely and unequivocally free of drug-related money-laundering. Furthermore, the Government is ever vigilant and remains in close contact with the banking association to prevent even a hint of the placement, layering or integration of drug money in our country.

Laundering drug money and consenting to it is immoral and degrades human dignity, and all countries must work together to reject these practices by which the dividends of death and destruction are blindly recycled. Efforts must be made as well in judicial and police cooperation among States to promote drug control. In this respect, I am happy to note that the Andorran police, acting in full agreement with Interpol and neighbouring police forces, have always been and will continue to be diligent in fighting against drug traffic.

When talking about drugs, one tends to think only of disenchanted young people in developed nations. We must not forget the ways in which the scourge of drugs affects developing countries. Eradicating illicit drug crops and replacing them is an effort that must not be left to them alone, especially when criminal gangs and armed individuals control drug production and trade. Developed countries must bear their burden of responsibility. This year, Andorra will consider ways of collaborating more efficiently with drug-producing countries to help them replace those crops, in addition to increasing its contribution to the Youth Fund and contributing funds aimed at eradicating small arms.

Andorra will be there when needed to fight drugs and help young people combat this enemy of mankind. Human beings are at their best when they think, and drugs annihilate reason. I therefore pledge the full endorsement of my country to the aims of this special session.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports of Andorra for her statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Abdullah, Minister of Health of Maldives.

Mr. Abdullah (Maldives): We are indeed very pleased that the United Nations is holding this special session of the General Assembly devoted to the world drug problem. We express our sincere thanks for the excellent plan of action under deliberation here. We will extend our full support to this worthy cause.

The problem of drugs is a result of, among other things, the failure to address the spiritual dimension of development. In a world that is moving increasingly towards materialism, traditional values, families and religion are being relegated to the background. The young people of today are guided more by rebellious desires than moral values.

The globalization of crime is another cause of serious concern. Illicit growers of narcotics, traffickers, money launderers and drug dealers in the end-user countries are joined by a global network that uses high-speed communications. As a result, major drug traffickers are now carrying out their nefarious business with impunity and living in undescribable luxury while their victims are suffering in shame.

Drugs have become one of our most serious problems. The escalation of the drug problem has coincided with modern development, but it is naive to conclude that the problem is a result of development. Rather, it is the result of the failure to achieve balanced growth and reduce the gross inequities and deprivations that characterize our societies. The widening gap between the haves and the have-nots has resulted in social disruption and escalation of crimes. Drugs are one of the symptoms of this widespread social malady.

In the Maldives, drug abuse was identified in the mid-seventies with the global escalation of the problem and increased travel by Maldivians abroad. The first legislation on drugs was passed in 1977. Since then, the number drug offenders has increased at an alarming rate. Fortunately, there is no underground criminal distribution network in the country. We are not a drug-producing country. But traffickers respect no borders. Drugs are imported by small-time criminals from neighbouring countries. This makes it extremely difficult to pinpoint and trace them. There is a strong need to strengthen customs, police and intelligence to help improve the situation.

In the Maldives, the Drug Law was amended in 1995 to address the escalating drug situation. Subsequently, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom has set up a special department to implement comprehensive national drug control programmes. The most important change in the revised law is that drug suppliers have been prescribed harsher punishment, while the law looks at simple users with a benevolent eye. The latter are given every opportunity to reform and return to the mainstream of society.

Tobacco consumption is no less a problem than drugs. The health and economic impacts of tobacco are well known. We are therefore encouraged by the increased global action against tobacco. We express our thanks to the World Health Organization for its worthy initiatives.

I also congratulate the United States for taking bold new steps against drugs and tobacco. Maldives has taken several measures, including banning advertising and smoking in Government offices and in public places. With rising awareness, two of our islands have declared themselves tobacco-free islands.

The role of the non-governmental sector has also increased in the Maldives in the area of drug-abuse prevention and education. Non-governmental organizations and communities are also working closely to motivate young people for gainful occupations.

The problem of drugs calls for a comprehensive solution. Bold initiatives and courageous action are the needs of the hour. These should address the problem at its roots, namely, the social evils that foster a conducive atmosphere for drug abuse. Every effort must be made to keep young people off this dangerous path. A comprehensive solution requires active participation among all sectors, non-governmental organizations and the community. We must work together to eradicate illicit crops, strengthen international and regional cooperation, reduce demand, control money-laundering, strengthen judicial cooperation and control precursor and synthetic drugs.

I am convinced that this special session will formulate a pragmatic and comprehensive plan of action that will help us win the battle against drugs. Only our resolve and courage are required to translate our words into action. After all, it is our collective political will and commitment that will make the difference. We must all work together to save our children from this growing scourge and to ensure a dignified future.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister of Health of Maldives for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Shawki Marcus, Senior Under-Secretary, Minister of Health of Iraq.

Mr. Marcus (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like, at the outset, to say what an honour it is for me to convey the greetings of President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. My delegation has the pleasure of congratulating the President on his election to his important post at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly. We are convinced that his experience and his wisdom will ensure the success of this session and the achievement of the noble humanitarian objectives towards which we all work.

It is our pleasure to participate in the work of this session, in spite of the financial and economic difficulties that we are experiencing because of the embargo decreed against us. This shows how very much Iraq wishes to participate in international activities related to the struggle against narcotic drugs. This grave social phenomenon has permeated developed and developing societies alike, especially during the course of the last two decades. Above all, the roots of this phenomenon have undermined the economic, social and moral underpinnings of a number of countries throughout the world.

Iraq expressed long ago its serious desire to cooperate with specialized international agencies and has made sincere efforts to combat narcotic drugs. We have adhered to the relevant conventions, making them part of our national legislation: the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, the 1972 Protocol to the Single Convention and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

Several pieces of internal legislation have been enacted, particularly Iraqi drug law number 68 of 1965, as amended, in addition to the efforts and measures undertaken by the Ministries of Health and the Interior and the National Commission for the Fight Against Alcohol and Psychotropic Drugs. All these measures have had a considerable effect in making Iraq one of the few countries of the world where narcotics are produced and consumed solely for medical or therapeutic purposes. There are no cases in my country of the use of precursors or chemicals for the illicit production of psychotropic substances. With regard to publicizing the dangers of drugs and their abuse, the competent authorities have undertaken specific programmes to combat illicit drugs and psychotropic substances targeting all sectors of society.

The President returned to the Chair.

The economic sanctions imposed on my country have caused and continue to cause considerable material damage and human suffering and losses which touch all areas of life, including the fight against drugs. This has deprived Iraq of the financial resources necessary to participate in international and regional conferences. It has also prevented Iraq from keeping up with the new methods relating to the struggle against drugs in the world. Since October 1997, Iraq has not been able to participate in security and the anti-criminal activities of Interpol because it has not been able to fulfil its financial obligations as a result of the embargo. The embargo has also prevented Iraq from importing advanced technical equipment, from benefiting from international expertise and from attaching the personnel of its specialized anti-drug agencies to workshops organized outside Iraq.

It is regrettable that in the absence of central authority in the autonomous area of northern Iraq there are infractions and irregularities taking place. In addition, the area is used for smuggling drugs from neighbouring States. For our part, we have tried, as we did in 1992, to inform the International Narcotics Control Board of this.

Iraq pays tribute to that international organization for its serious efforts in this field. We reiterate our commitment to continue our serious cooperation with and contribution to the international community in order to completely eliminate drug abuse and illicit traffic in these substances from producer, consumer and transit countries. On the eve of the twenty-first century, let us work together to eliminate this scourge and achieve our objectives in an appropriate manner.

In conclusion, I would like once again to appeal to the Assembly to contribute to lifting the sanctions and to putting an end to this catastrophic situation, which runs

counter to the noble and vital objectives for which this Organization strives.

The President: I thank the Senior Under-Secretary, Minister of Health of Iraq for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Samuel R. Insanally, Chairman of the delegation of Guyana and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): Ten years have gone by since the nations of the world adopted the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. In that time, we have come to appreciate the true magnitude of the problem and to realize that much more remains to be done to eliminate the threat which this evil represents.

Drug-trafficking has now become a clear and present danger to international peace and security. The skilful laundering of its illicit proceeds provides the means to undermine entire societies and their economies.

The strong link which exists now between drug-trafficking, money-laundering, organized crime, terrorism and the traffic in arms creates a chain of complicity that is very hard to break. Despite increased law enforcement and seizures of drugs, the trade continues to flourish. The liberalization of the world economy has in fact created greater opportunities for traffickers to conceal their operations and to expand their control.

Such is the pervasiveness of the problem that most, if not all, countries are now caught in its web. In almost every city, town or village, one can see the deadly touch of drug abuse upon the faces of our people. Many have fallen victim to the dreaded AIDS virus, and many more to the crimes of violence that are the inevitable concomitant of the drug trade. Especially tragic is the fate of the young, who fall by the wayside and are condemned to a life of despair or, worse yet, to a horrible death.

My own country has not been immune to the drug contagion. Situated as it is, close to some of the world's major drug producers, Guyana is well on the way to becoming a major trans-shipment point for illicit drugs to markets in the developed world. With most of its 215,000 square kilometres uninhabited and consisting of dense equatorial forest, anti-narcotic operations along these extensive borders, as well as on the country's many rivers, present a great challenge to law enforcement. We simply do not have the communication equipment and transportation facilities necessary to counteract the illegal operations of drug traffickers.

Nor do we have the resources needed to put in place adequate legislative and legal machinery to deal with drug-related matters. Indeed, our campaign against drug abuse and drug-trafficking consumes scarce resources which could otherwise be used for developmental purposes. Worse yet, the inexperience of our financial institutions in dealing with money-laundering heightens the risk of penetration and corruption. Those who are in the business of narcotrafficking are well aware of these weaknesses and lose no opportunity to exploit them. It is for these reasons that Guyana considers it important that the international criminal court that has been proposed be given jurisdiction over the crime of narcotrafficking. A bill is currently before our Parliament to deal with money-laundering.

At the regional level, we are committed, along with other members of the Caribbean Community to the Barbados Plan of Action, which was agreed upon in May 1996 and continues to serve as the basis of coordination and cooperation. A regional meeting will be held within the coming months in Suriname to assess the progress being made. We are also making efforts to go beyond our subregion to form alliances at the international level.

Such partnerships, we believe, are necessary to the formulation of an integrated and effective strategy to combat the spread of drug-trafficking. It is only through international cooperation that we, as small developing countries, can hope to strengthen our capacity to play a more effective role in the fight against drugs. To be acceptable and effective, however, such cooperation must be based on respect for our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The drug problem is, after all, the shared responsibility of all States, by which the stronger should assist the weaker. Accordingly, we would like to see enlarged assistance programmes given more priority by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and by donor countries. At the same time, a strategy of alternative development needs to be fully sustained to provide a disincentive to the production and manufacture of psychotropic substances.

In this context, we welcome the joint statement made by the Administrative Committee on Coordination to the General Assembly reflecting the global and multifaceted nature of the drug problem and the need,

therefore, for a balanced and holistic approach. We also welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to create the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention and trust that it will be provided with the resources necessary to fulfil its mandate. There is no reason, in our view, why confiscated criminal assets cannot be used to fund some of its activities.

The international drug control treaties which we have signed are indispensable instruments in the fight against drugs. So too is the Global Programme of Action. Translation of these common objectives into practical action is imperative. The draft Political Declaration, action plans and target dates to be agreed upon at this session should provide further impetus to the implementation of our agreed policies.

In our arsenal of weapons to fight the drug menace, the most important are undoubtedly education and public awareness as to its dangers. Once the ugly face of the enemy is fully known, it will, in all likelihood, lose its fatal attraction. It is imperative therefore that the international community should come together to mount a far-reaching education and public awareness campaign designed to show the dark side of drug abuse and drug-trafficking.

May I finally observe that our efforts to address these problems will succeed only if they are accompanied by a serious attempt to remedy the problems of underdevelopment which many of our countries face. Poverty and social degradation continue to provide fertile ground for the spread of these vices. Unless we can come together as one to arrest the deterioration of our societies, we run the risk of losing not only this generation, but all of civilization as we know it. We can do no less than renew our determination to destroy the drug monster before we are ourselves destroyed.

The President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Guyana for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lee See-young, Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lee (Republic of Korea): This being my first opportunity to address the General Assembly as Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, allow me to begin by expressing my full confidence in your leadership, Mr. President, to crown this special session with great success. This occasion is particularly meaningful for me because I had the opportunity to chair the thirty-seventh session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 1994.

I am honoured today to join leaders from around the world in reaffirming a common commitment to forge a new global strategy to cope with the pervasive threat of drug abuse. On a daily basis, ever growing numbers of people succumb to this devastating scourge with ruinous consequences, inflicting tremendous hardship on their families and communities and, in turn, further undermining democratic political systems and economic structures. The illicit use, sale and proliferation of drugs is a global challenge that warrants a global response. This gathering offers renewed hope for the realization of a drug-free world.

At the advent of the twenty-first century, this special session presents an unprecedented opportunity to make the best use of recent developments in the field of drug control. With the cold war now behind us, barriers to global cooperation between East and West have fallen, and the battle against drugs has moved to centre stage on the international scene.

Furthermore, producer and consumer countries can no longer lay blame upon one another. Today, all members of the international community bear responsibility for stemming the flow of illicit drugs. Through the shared recognition and common pursuit of that paramount objective, the potential exists to uproot the drug problem once and for all. That spirit is embodied in the Political Declaration to be adopted at this session. Comprising pragmatic guidelines aimed at translating commitments into realities, it strikes at the very core of the drug problem: supply and demand. It establishes firm and achievable target dates which can serve to promote our future efforts. Against that backdrop, I have every confidence that the Declaration can truly constitute another milestone in our long struggle against illegal drugs.

Throughout the preparatory process for this session, Member States demonstrated their readiness to harmonize judicial cooperation mechanisms and to establish a legislative framework for money-laundering countermeasures. Global implementation of related action plans, if fully realized, will no longer allow organized drug traffickers to exploit safe havens or loopholes. Indeed, these measures will constitute a quantum leap forward in our efforts to control drug supplies by targeting the primary source of this affliction.

However, the other aspect of drug control should not be overlooked. Although a balanced approach between supply control and demand reduction has long guided our work, we must recognize that efforts to reduce demand still fall well short of their desired objective, due primarily to the emphasis placed on suppressing illicit manufacturing and trafficking. In this context, I believe that the adoption of the draft Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction can remedy the shortcomings of the past, thereby facilitating our collective capacity to simultaneously address supply and demand.

It is also timely and appropriate for this session to take up the issue of amphetamine-type stimulants and their precursors. In responding swiftly to this newly emerging threat, this session can set another positive example in the continuous adaptation of our drug control strategy to the changing trends of drug abuse. My delegation shares the concern of the international community that the battle against illicit drug-trafficking is being undermined by the increasing involvement in the drug trade of international organized crime and terrorist elements. Hence, our initiatives can be effective only when drug and organized crime issues are tackled simultaneously by law enforcement agencies from both fields. For this reason, we welcome the Secretary-General's endeavour to strengthen international efforts to combat crime, drugs and terrorism by establishing the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention to oversee the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the Centre for International Crime Prevention. This initiative has begun to produce synergy between the two organizations.

During the past several decades, the United Nations has proved invaluable in leading international cooperative efforts towards drug control, and with dramatic results. Particularly salient among the United Nations achievements is the initiative to eliminate the illicit cultivation of narcotic crops. As a result, vast regions that once served as havens for illicit opium poppy and coca bush cultivation have been converted to arable land for legitimate agricultural production.

Drawing upon its more than 25 years of unparalleled experience in this field, the United Nations is now undertaking a project intended to ultimately eliminate or substantially reduce opium poppy and coca bush growth. This will certainly not be an easy task, but the United Nations is well equipped with effective strategies, a comprehensive global plan and an active monitoring system.

The Republic of Korea has consistently stepped up its efforts to control the increasing use of drugs and their illicit manufacture and trafficking. These have paid off on several fronts. My Government has come down hard on the manufacture of methamphetamine, a new drug of choice in my country, second only to marijuana. However, methamphetamine smuggled into Korea from less controlled neighbouring regions has overtaken domestic manufacturing capacities. This underscores the urgent need for enhanced international and regional cooperation.

Indeed, any counteraction at the national level, however strong, is easily thwarted without collective countermeasures at the international, regional and subregional levels. In this regard, Korea has engaged in bilateral consultations with neighbouring countries and has played an active role in promoting regional and subregional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. In this vein, my country supports the concerted efforts made thus far by the six Asian countries signatories to the 1995 memorandum of understanding on drug control, in strengthening cooperation in South-East Asia. We welcome in particular their joint declaration issued at this session.

It has been clearly proved that with regard to drug abuse, prevention is far more desirable and cost-effective than seeking a cure. Global campaigns and educational programmes must be intensified so as to raise public awareness of the appalling effects of drug addiction. Seen from this perspective, my delegation is very pleased to note that since their introduction in 1992, at Korea's initiative, the UNDCP goodwill ambassadors have substantially contributed to enhanced public awareness and fund-raising.

This special session coincides with the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. This session thus provides an opportunity to review the implementation of the 1988 Convention and to elaborate further steps. With that in mind, my Government has initiated the necessary domestic procedures to accede to the Convention before the end of this year.

I am confident that our strong, unequivocal and united voice in this Assembly will reverberate among the general public and serve as an ultimatum to criminal organizations. In order to sustain that message beyond this century, however, any initiatives taken at this session

must be followed by political and financial commitments from all Member States. For its part, the Government of the Republic of Korea will remain an active and constructive participant in the international community's war on drugs.

The President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Korea for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fassassi Adam Yacoubou, Chairman of the delegation of Benin.

Mr. Yacoubou (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): At the outset I should like, on behalf of the delegation of Benin, to join those speakers who have congratulated and expressed their appreciation to you, Sir, upon your unanimous election to guide the work of this twentieth special session of the General Assembly devoted to the international community's fight against drugs throughout the world.

I should also like to congratulate Mr. Pino Arlacchi, Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), for the vigour and professionalism that he has shown at the helm of that body.

Eight years after the convening of the seventeenth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to international drug control, the current session offers a further opportunity to States Members of the Organization to take stock of the actions taken and to outline a new course for the future.

Given the changes that have taken place throughout the world in the past decade, it is regrettable that, despite the measures that have been implemented, drugs have truly become a scourge that is continuing to spread.

The report of the International Narcotics Control Board indicates that drug-trafficking and drug abuse have spread to new regions of the world, especially in Africa and in Asia. Indeed, the African continent has become a favoured network for the illicit traffic in drugs of all kinds because of the extremely limited material and financial means available to our countries to combat this phenomenon. The devastating consequences for African countries of drug abuse and illicit trafficking are the same everywhere: increased crime, violence, juvenile delinquency and social decay.

Aware of the dangers to which people are becoming increasingly exposed, and recognizing the importance of international cooperation, the Republic of Benin passed Law No. 96-009 on 31 May 1996 by which it acceded to the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The Republic of Benin thereby became a State party to the three United Nations conventions that form the basis of international efforts to control drug abuse and trafficking in narcotics, psychotropic substances and precursors.

At another level, Benin, which already has a national drug analysis laboratory, adopted Law No. 97-0025 on 18 July 1997 relating to the control of drugs and precursors, as well as to the appropriate regulatory instruments.

The establishment and installation of a national data bank to collect information on drug abuse and drug-trafficking and to communicate such information to the competent national and international bodies will provide further support to the efforts of the Government of Benin to strengthen national structures to coordinate the fight against drug abuse and illicit drug-trafficking in Benin.

In implementing its policy to combat and control narcotics, the Government of Benin relies in particular on non-governmental organizations for their valuable contribution to caring for, educating and providing social and economic rehabilitation for young drug addicts and alcoholics.

In the context of seeking and consolidating the regional cooperation that is necessary if we are to confront collectively the scourge of drugs in Africa, the United Nations must attach greater importance to technical cooperation for the control, prevention and reduction of drug addiction, with a view to eliminating the constantly growing demand for psychotropic substances.

The global Organization must also provide more human and financial resources to the United Nations Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI), the only regional instrument that deals with combating the illicit traffic in drugs.

While recognizing that the international community today has the necessary tools to combat drug abuse and illicit traffic in narcotics, we must now be innovative in adopting a new approach to supplement the measures that have been taken to date. We will not succeed in halting drug abuse and the crime that it engenders unless we take preventive action based on a global, balanced and

coordinated approach, together with campaigns to raise awareness and to provide information and education for parents, teachers, women, grass-roots communities and primary and secondary schools.

There can no longer be any doubt that the individual consumer base for drugs is currently expanding to include women, young people and children, with the resultant family disintegration. Above all, therefore, the challenge is to revitalize and strengthen family structures in our respective societies. This approach, taken together with current stringent measures and with others that we will recommend at this session, will have a considerable effect on the demand for drugs.

These considerations on combating the illicit traffic in drugs strongly characterized the debate, decisions and recommendations of the twenty-first regular session of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the Organization of African Unity, which was held from 13 to 18 April 1998 in Pretoria, South Africa.

At another level, drug-control measures adopted by Governments can succeed only if all States parties strictly comply with the provisions of international treaties governing the cultivation, production, manufacture and use of narcotic drugs.

Now more than ever, concerted action on a global scale is necessary. That is why the delegation of Benin will give its full support to the Political Declaration to be adopted by our Assembly at the end of this session. It is vital, therefore, for the international community, through that Political Declaration, to reaffirm that it intends to make the fight against drugs a priority in the next millennium and to mobilize the necessary resources to this end.

Before concluding, I must emphasize the positive contribution made by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the significant support provided by the developed countries that are trying to assist developing countries to strengthen their capacity to combat drug abuse and illic[illegible] traffic in narcotics.

The President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Benin for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hersey Kyota, Chairman of the delegation of Palau.

Mr. Kyota (Palau): I bring warm greetings from the Republic of Palau. We are pleased to join in the discussion at this important session because the goal of eradicating illegal drugs is one of the highest priorities for our country and requires the meaningful and real cooperation of all the nations on our planet. Although we are a small country, our experience may be helpful in dealing with terrible drugs and the horrible people who traffic in them.

For those who do not know Palau, we are a small island nation located just north of the equator in the western Pacific Ocean. Our islands are spread over a few hundred miles from north to south, but most of our population is concentrated in our capital city of Koror. We are an island paradise, the foremost scuba diving destination in the world. Our rock islands are an international treasure, and our waters are pristine. We have abundant seafood; our economy is growing; we have high educational standards; our streets are safe; and we have relatively little crime. We have a strong constitutional Government and cultural values developed from our ancestors that permeate every aspect of our society.

But in our paradise we, too, experience the scourge and horror of illegal drugs, particularly among young people. Since we have a small and closely knit society, one might think that our paradise is free of drugs. But our problem is real and it is escalating.

Over the last few years a newly introduced drug — methamphetamine, commonly known as "ice" — has become a major problem, in addition to the existing problem of marijuana in Palau. The range of people who use "ice" has expanded to include people as young as 13 and 14 years old. Our Minister of Justice reports high drug activity on high school campuses, resulting in higher rates of absenteeism, the dramatic lowering of grades, less concentration in the classroom and loss of interest in sports and other activities making up the educational experience. Although our law enforcement authorities are well trained and respected, we lack the technology, expertise and technical knowledge to effectively combat this terrible problem of illegal drugs.

Even worse, in addition to arrests for the use, possession or sale of these drugs, our Ministry of Justice reports that a high percentage of the people arrested for felony cases have been under the influence of drugs. Furthermore, large numbers of individuals arrested in cases of domestic violence, burglary and similar crimes

are seeking money for drugs. While the absolute number of cases in Palau is relatively low, their pervasiveness indicates the impact of illegal narcotics in a society as well founded and strong as that of Palau. We must remember that the law enforcement statistics only hint at the real picture of illegal drug activities, because many drug-related crimes and cases of drug abuse go unreported or undetected.

I have made the fight against illegal drugs one of the highest national priorities under our Administration. Palau has greatly increased its law enforcement capabilities, acquiring special dogs trained to detect illegal drugs, as well as enforcement vehicles and equipment, and increasing the penalties for all offences involving controlled substances. In Palau today, trafficking in "ice", cocaine and similar drugs can lead to a minimum sentence of 25 years and fines of up to $1 million. The Government of Palau has established many programmes, including anti-substance abuse programmes, juvenile justice programmes and a unique "dare programme" aimed at promoting awareness and encouraging citizens, particularly young people, to avoid the scourge of drugs.

These are effective and well-run programmes, but they are not enough, and the Republic of Palau is working on plans to increase personnel and other resources, education and law enforcement to ensure that it is well armed in what is clearly a war over illegal drugs.

The lessons from our country should be clear. First, illegal drugs and the damage they cause to society and families are not limited to places around the world that suffer economically or do not have high levels of education or opportunity. The use of illegal drugs around the world is, as in the paradise of Palau, a major and growing economic and human tragedy.

Secondly, the leaders of countries must admit to the realities and reach of the illegal drug problem. We can no longer pretend that it is not there, no matter how well the country is doing. By facing the problem, we can begin to address it.

Thirdly, the traffic and trade in illicit drugs is multinational and operates without regard to political or geographical boundaries. Indeed, these boundaries may even aid the drug trade. The drug trade is a multinational problem that should be dealt with collectively and cooperatively by all nations, large and small. No one nation can unilaterally win the fight against illegal drugs. This is especially true in small island States such as the Republic of Palau.

Palau is a few hours away from many countries by small plane and a few days away by boat. Our personnel, equipment and financial resources are too limited to enable us to put together an adequate programme to safeguard our ports and coastline from trans-shipments illegal drugs. As a result, illicit drugs can be moved from other countries to Palau very quickly without being detected. Palau does not desire to be the stepping-stone or gateway for illegal drugs to major drug markets in other parts of the world. I know our fellow Pacific island nations do not wish to be in that situation, either.

As a small island nation, fairly remote in the Pacific, we therefore urge the General Assembly to consider the following factors in any decisions that it makes. First, small nations need the training, technology and assistance that will help them deal with internal drug problems if they are to be part of an international effort to combat illegal drugs.

Secondly, from the perspective of smaller countries, we need new and improved mechanisms for communication and coordination across borders with regard to illegal drug activities. We need to share much more rapidly and on a more complete basis information about patterns of drug abuse, drug transactions and drug money transactions.

Thirdly, special strategies need to be developed for small island nations. Our resources are very limited, and often our borders and accessible areas are relatively unprotected. We need assistance from the larger countries, particularly our neighbours, to help us combat the flow of illegal drugs either into or through our countries. When a neighbouring country forces the drug trade from its airport or harbour, it may be headed for ours or for that of another neighbour. It is these kinds of special strategies that will allow our small countries to help make a dent in this siege of illegal drugs.

Let me close by expressing the appreciation of the Republic of Palau for this special session of the General Assembly. We truly believe that the multinational illegal drug business can be combated only through a multinational commitment and effort involving all the nations of the world.

We are all exposed, and we will all pay the price so long as the drug merchants can flourish or are tolerated on any part of our planet. We in Palau know that we must do our part to protect our paradise. We also know that we must protect our country and help make the world safe for the peoples of other countries by being a part of a comprehensive, multinational world, leaving the drug traffickers no place to hide.

The President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Palau for his statement.

The meeting rose at 8.30 p.m.